

This begins the second part of the Book of Revelations (chapters 4-22). The first three chapters related to John's current events, while the rest is all in the future. There is a change of scenes, or possibly a new vision. Chapters 4 and 5 are a vision of God's throne. The vision of the throne includes those surrounding and praising God, who are symbolized with numbers, stones, colors, and animals (see Handout 9-8-20, pg 3 "Symbols"). This introduces the earth's future and final destiny.

Vision of God's Throne (Rev 4:1-11)

Rev 4:1 "I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven" (NIV) After God gave John messages for his ecclesiastical responsibilities over the seven churches, his vision continued. In language similar to Nephi's dream of the Tree of Life, "the spirit said, 'Look!'" The open "door" that John sees is a wide welcoming door to the heavenly temple and throne of God. Our temples are patterned after God's heavenly temple near Kolob which "is set nigh unto the throne of God" (Abraham 3:9).

"And the first voice I had heard was like a trumpet" (NR) Similar to Nephi, John had a guide through his visionary experience. The guide's voice is as a trumpet—clear, profound, beautiful, penetrating, and inviting. Trumpets were used by the Israelites in temples at the time of sacrifice, during battles, and special holidays—including the whole day of the "Feast of the Trumpets" (the civil New Year's Day, *Rosh Hashana*, "day of blowing"). Ancient trumpets were both rams' horns (shofar), and those shaped from metal.

"Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this" (NIV) This phrase also echoes temple imagery from Psalms 24:3-4; 92:13; Isaiah 60:7; etc. God knows what will happen—but that does not exclude human agency. This describes a rigid predeterminism that assures the reader that God's will shall come to pass. If we view history from God's throne as John did, we can receive a clear perspective and vantage point of reality, while here on earth, "we see through a glass darkly" (1 Cor 13:12).

Rev 4:2 "I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne" John's spirit sees into the heavens open to the throne of God. The text is a temple text as in Moses' Tabernacle and in Solomon's temple; the throne of God was symbolized by the Ark of the Covenant and its lid, known as "The Mercy Seat" (Ex 25:20). In the second temple (Zerubbabel's with Herod's additions), the Holy of Holies was empty except for angels that guarded the place where the throne was in prior temples. The word "throne" is repeated forty times across the book of Revelation. That may just be by chance, or it may symbolize the cleansing period required before entering into God's presence.

Visions of the throne of God are called, "Throne Theophany," and were also recorded by Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Lehi, Nephi, Alma, Abraham, Joseph Smith, to name a few (Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1:1-28; 1 Kings 22:19; Daniel 7, 10; 1 Nephi 1:6-14; D&C 76:21; 137:3; etc.). Look at the similarities between those and the vision of the degrees of glory: "We beheld the glory of the Son, on the right hand of the Father, and received of his fulness; and saw the holy angels, and them who are sanctified before his throne, worshipping God, and the Lamb, who worship him forever and ever" (D&C 76:20-21). Seeing God's throne seems to be a rite of passage for prophets and other anointed ones.

Rev 4:3 "the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne" (NIV) The stones mentioned mean more than just lovely gems to beautify the throne. They hold symbolic meaning as they are found as the *first and last* stone in the High Priest's breastplate. The high priest wore one stone for each of the tribes of Israel with their names engraven. The "ruby / sardine" (NIV / KJV) is also translated "carnelian" (BSB).

The colors were significant symbolically—red and green: the red of blood and the green of life. They speak of the gifts of God to humanity. Ezekiel also used these colors in a place of honor: "every precious stone . . . sardius, . . . jasper, . . . [and] emerald" (Ezk 28:13).

The emerald is used to describe a "rainbow" around the throne, to represent life and creation with the color green. God told Noah that the rainbow would be a sign of His covenant with mankind. Symbols have many meanings, one of which, here is that the covenant is still intact. The emerald was also the third stone in the high priest's breastplate and belonging to the tribe of Levi (Ex 28:17-21). Jesus of Nazareth became the great High Priest in heaven (Heb 4:14)

Rev 4:4 "Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads" (ESV) The JST includes that these seats were in the "midst" of the throne. As mentioned earlier, a few numbers have special meaning in the Bible. When a special number was doubled or squared, it doubled in importance or even more than the initial special number. Twelve is used in scripture for God's order. In the creation He organized the rotation of the earth around twelve moons or months; He organized His people into twelve tribes and His leaders into twelve apostles. In the latter days, the

D&C 77:5 "These elders whom John saw, were elders who had been faithful in the work of the ministry and were dead; who belonged to the seven churches, and were then in the paradise of God."

twelfth year became the age to begin priesthood service. Twelve doubled may symbolically represent God's perfected order in heaven.

The twenty-four elders wore purified white robes with gold royal crowns, referring to their roles and positions. The Lord explained to Joseph Smith that these specific twenty-four elders were the faithful deceased members of the seven churches who are now with God (D&C 77:5).

Rev 4:5 “from the throne came lightnings, and rumblings, and thunderings” (NR) Translating “voices / noises / rumblings” represents the background sounds or power surrounding the throne. We read of similar sounds on Sinai where God appeared to Moses (Ex 20:18). The earth and its power are also subject to God as their creator.

“Seven lampstands of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God” (NR) John recorded that he observed by sight and sound—he did not come up with the symbols, he just recorded them. The seven fiery lamps represent seven servants of God. Jesus asked His disciples to “let their light so shine” (Mt 5:16).

The symbol of a fiery light also harkens back to the pillar of fire that accompanied the children of Israel every evening in the wilderness. Later, God's light or fire referred to as the “*shekhinah* / dwelling,” came over the tabernacle and temple at its dedication. The image was repeated in the Restoration with “the Spirit of God like a fire is burning.” Servants of God are directed by, and work according to, the Spirit of God. The sanctifying work of the Spirit is the baptism by fire.

Rev 4:6 “In front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal” (NIV) This is the first

verse that Joseph asked about in D&C 77:1 “What is the sea of glass?” (Also see D&C 130:6-9). The “crystal” transparency may allow one to see into the past, present and future, like an Urim and Thummim. In the early Israelite tabernacle and temple, the high priest also carried two clear stones known as “lights and perfections / Urim and Thummim” in Hebrew (Ex 28:30; Lev 8:8; Num 27:21; Deu 33:8; 1 Sam 28:6; Ezr 2:63; Neh 7:65; JS-H 1:35). The sea of glass seems to take on qualities of the Urim and Thummim.

D&C 77:1 “It is the earth, in its sanctified, immortal, and eternal state.”

To further explain this “seal of glass,” on April 2, 1843, at a General Conference in Nauvoo, IL, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “Angels do not reside on a planet like this earth. But they reside in the presence of God—but on a Globe like a ‘sea of glass and fire’ where all things are manifest past, present, and to come—the place where God resides is a great Urim and Thummim . . . This earth in its sanctified and immortal state will be a Urim and Thummim for all things below it in the scale of creation, but not above it” (Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 171).

“In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in

back” (NIV) The Prophet asked the Lord what the four beasts were (D&C 77:2; also see *TPJS*, 287-294). He learned that they were a higher form of each animal that represented classifications (not like the book of Daniel where they are figures of things on our earth).

Another symbol in this verse is the eyes that cover the four creatures. The Lord explained that the animals are filled with eyes to represent knowledge. They may have some degree of omniscience having the power to see things “before and behind” (KJV).

D&C 77:2-3 “They are figurative expressions . . . describing heaven, the paradise of God, the happiness of man, and of beasts, and of creeping things, and of the fowls of the air; that which is spiritual being in the likeness of that which is temporal . . . represent[ing] the glory of the classes of beings in their destined order . . . in the enjoyment of their eternal felicity.”

D&C 77:4 “Their eyes are a representation of light and knowledge”

Rev 4:7 “The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle” (NIV) John described animals familiar to our planet. Yet, in their celestialized state they can speak and sing. Other visions of the throne of God include animals as well (i.e. Ezekiel's four creatures). On April 8, 1843, the Prophet Joseph added “John heard the words of the beasts giving glory to God, and understood them. God who made the beasts could understand every language spoken by them” (JosephSmithPapers.org, *History 1838-1856*, vol D-1, 1523).

Rev 4:8 “The four animals each had six wings, and were filled with eyes all around on the inside. And day and night they never ceased saying “Holy, holy holy, Lord God Almighty” (NR) John described winged creatures. In Greco-Roman traditions, a few gods had wings adding speed to their travel (Hermes, Mercury, and Cupid). When the Prophet Joseph asked what the wings meant, he was told they are the power to move and act. Christian artists misunderstand the symbolism, and portray heavenly beings incorrectly. When Isaiah sees the throne of God and describes angels with six wings, they, too, represent the power to move and act. The heavenly creatures praised God as He “who was and who is and who is coming.”

D&C 77:4 “. . . their wings are a representation of power, to move, to act, etc.”

Rev 4:9-11 “whenever the living creatures give glory . . . the twenty-four elders fall down before the One seated on the throne, and they worship Him . . . They cast their crowns before the throne, saying: “You are worthy, our Lord and God” (BSB) The twenty-four elders joined with the creatures in worshipping God. These good saints are humbled and cast their crowns before the throne of God. They acknowledge Him as their creator. We know that all of God's work and glory is to “bring to pass the immortality and Eternal Life of man” (Moses 1:39).

The Lion and the Scroll of Destiny with Seven Seals (Rev 5:1-5)

Rev 5:1 “I saw in the right hand of him who sits on the throne a scroll with writing on the inside and outside, sealed with seven seals” (NR)

It appears that Elohim sits on the throne (see 5:7 for Jehovah’s location). The “*book*” was actually a scroll. It was customary to write on one side only, but this one is written on both sides, possibly to represent that nothing was left out. Legal documents were sealed to prove authenticity. Documents were written in duplicate, with one of them closed and sealed, to be opened only by a Judge “if anyone challenged the content.” (Draper and Rhodes, *BYU NTC: Revelation*, 225). The witness wrapped string around the scroll embedding it in clay or wax that was used to personalize the seal. Seven seals assured its safety.

Historically, we find other seven-sealed documents. For example, “one such type of covenant was the Roman will that also bore seven seals. Such testaments could not be administered until all the seals were broken. Only a person of authority could legally break the seals and execute the will” (Ibid.,226). Here in John’s vision, Jesus is the judge who opened the seals at the appropriate times.

The Prophet Joseph learned that each of the seven seals stands for each millennial period of the earth’s human history (also D&C 88:108-110). This is a jarringly different interpretation than we find among other Christians. It gives a very clear chronological view of the earth’s history.

D&C 77:6-7 “We are to understand that it contains the revealed will, mysteries and the works of God; the hidden things of his economy concerning this earth during the seven thousand years of its continuance, or its temporal existence. . . . the first seal contains the things of the first thousand years, and the second also of the second thousand years, and so on.”

Rev 5:2 “I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to open the scroll by breaking its seals?’” (NR) Many angels are specifically pointed out in the Book of Revelation. John heard this “mighty” or “strong” (KJV) angel calling for someone worthy or who is prepared with authority to open the seals. The strong angel may represent one with authority, or “one of the noble and great ones” (Abr 3:22-23). The phrase, “loud voice,” signifies the importance of the message, and is repeated eleven times in the text.

Rev 5:3-4 “I wept bitterly, because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look into it” (NR) Similar to the practice of the Roman Empire, only a judge with the correct authority—or if he were worthy and qualified to open them—could open the seals (and disclose or comprehend them). John saw that the mighty angel could not find anyone qualified. So, the search was made beyond the inhabitants of earth into the heavens, but no one was found. John sensed the significance of this, as if he knew the importance of the role of the judge of the world, and he wept.

Rev 5:5 “And one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep. See, the Lion from the tribe of Judah, even the branch of David, has overcome so that he can open the scroll’” (NR) One of the elders seated around the throne who belonged to one of the seven churches comforted John with the wonderful news that someone worthy has been found. Only He (Jesus) has the qualifications as Judge to open the scroll and to act as the legal judge to read and determine the outcome of history. Only Jesus has the power of history. Jesus is the Lion, the King of Beasts, or a conquering Messiah. When Patriarch Jacob (or Israel) gave his father’s blessing to Judah he felt inspired to say, “Judah is a lion’s whelp . . . The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come” (Gen 49:9). The Lion of Judah was Jesus of Nazareth.

This translation describes Jesus as a “branch of David,” derived from “*netser*.” Jesus is the Messianic branch of the House of David in Mt 2:23, and Isaiah 11:1, “There shall come a rod out of the stem of Jesse and a *Branch* out of his roots.” This also fulfills other OT prophecies, which describe a Messianic branch of the House of David. In considering the Messianic impact of *netser* / branch, there are many scriptures with the same idea. For example, in Jeremiah 23:5 the Lord says, “I shall raise up a righteous shoot for David; as king he will reign and govern wisely.” The Suffering Servant Song of Isaiah 53:2 compares the servant to a “sapling” and a “root.” At the time of the New Testament, the Jews in Qumran used “branch” or *netser* in an eschatological sense of God’s plan of salvation. The Dead Sea Scroll community described itself as “an everlasting planting” (Dead Sea Scrolls, 1QH vi 15, vii 19, vii 6, 8, 10). This is probably an echo of Isaiah 60:21, “a branch of His planting.” Thus a secondary connection of “Nazorean” comes from applying Jesus to the prophetic “branch of David” passages in Rev 5:6. (For more see Raymond Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, 211-212.)

The Worthy Lamb Slain (Rev 5:6-7)

Rev 5:6 “in the midst of the throne . . . stood a Lamb as it had been slain” In this context, the Lion is also the Lamb who was slain with the marks of fatal wounds—the symbols are powerful. The names and symbols of the Lord teach us much about His roles. The name Jesus / *Yeshua* is a form of the word “save” or “Savior.” It is the lion who becomes the lamb who provides salvation. When JBpst introduced his cousin, Jesus, he said: “Behold the Lamb of God” (Jn 1:29, 36). Interestingly, none of the other Gospels use this title, but Paul refers to Jesus as our Passover lamb” (1 Co 5:7, NIV, also see Ac 8:32). In the book of Revelation, John mentions “the Lamb” twenty-eight times. Jesus is the lamb taken to the slaughter, but here in Revelation the slain Lamb lives.

“having seven [twelve JST] horns and seven [twelve JST] eyes, which are spirits [servants JST] of God who have been sent forth to all the earth” (NR) The JST changes the *seven* horns and eyes to *twelve*. Symbolically, I like both—the Lamb is whole and perfect and also has God’s divine organization and priesthood power. Richard Draper and Michael Rhodes explain the twelve servants as apostles:

This seems to be a specific reference to the Twelve Apostles since the verb . . . “sent forth,” is cognate with the noun . . . “apostle” (literally “one who is sent forth”). In John’s day, the word carried more than one nuance. For the Greeks, the one sent was the one empowered or commissioned to act for the one doing the sending. For the Jews and Christians, the term designated anyone commissioned and empowered by God, one who had authority to speak His word and administer His ordinances (ibid., 232).

Another symbol used here are the “horns.” On each corner of the temple, the sacrificial alter horn represented power and salvation or cleansing power. The eyes have power to see giving them the symbol of omniscience. All these images may have other multiple meanings as well.

Rev 5:7 “he came and took the scroll out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne” (NR) Jesus, acting as the slain lamb, took the sealed scroll from Elohim who sits on the throne. Only our Savior had the preparation and power to implement all the terms of the Father’s plan. The heart or center of that plan in the history of the earth’s salvation is Jesus Christ.

The New Song (Rev 5:8-14)

Rev 5:8 “when he took the scroll, the four animals and twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one having a harp, and golden bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of saints” (NR) When the Lord takes the book/scroll, those surrounding the throne prostrate themselves in worship. We learn that they had made music with harps and had something to do with the saint’s prayers—either transporting or delivering them to the throne. Incense was also used to represent prayers in the OT temple (Psalm 141:2).

Rev 5:9 “And they sang a new song changing, ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals, because you were slain and have purchased people for God by your blood . . .’ (NR) Those around the throne sang a new song. (Other “new songs” are recorded in D&C 84:98; Psalms 33:3; 40:3 and Rev 15:3-4.) The language of God includes music. The lyrics to this song powerfully praise the redemption made through the at-one-ment of Jesus Christ. He bought us back from being slaves to Satan and sin.

Rev 5:10 “You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God” (NR) The calling of a priest is to serve the Lord. By serving Him we can find freedom. The Prophet Joseph Smith restored the knowledge that this kingdom is also for priestesses. (“Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book,” p. 22, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 20, 2019, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/nauvoo-relief-society-minute-book/19>).

The Lamb’s act of salvation not only saves us from our sins, but it also gives immortality to all on earth. By participating in the at-one-ment, our Savior has also made it possible to become kings and queens, priests and priestesses, to reign under our Almighty God (Moses 1:39).

Rev 5:11-12 “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain . . .” These two verses make up the lyrics of the new song mentioned above (and to Handel’s Messiah). John’s crying is turned into rejoicing as One worthy and willing is found to open the scrolls. The ancient numbers go up to one thousand and then are repeated. Literally, the vision describes ten with at least sixteen zeros, but it probably means a very large number of people all praising and honoring Jesus as the One slain for them.

Rev 5:13 “Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb” The third hymn of praise is sung by every created thing both humans and animals (Also see D&C 128:23; Smith, *TPJS*, 291-292).

Rev 5:14 “Amen” This portion of the vision closes with all creation offering praise, glory, and authority to God the Father and His Son. The Greek word, *amen*, means “truly / verily / so let it be.” (Strong’s, #281, <https://biblehub.com/greek/281.htm>). Only in John’s Gospel does he repeat: “Verily, verily,” (which we find in fifteen different verses, i.e. Jn 1:51; 3:3, 5, 11; etc.) It is used as an epithet for the Lord Jesus Christ in Rev 3:14. Paul uses it as “all the promises of God in him *are* yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (2 Co 1:20). In the OT, it is found singly and sometimes doubly at the end of prayers (Psalms 41:13; 72:19; 89:52), to confirm the words and invoke the fulfillment of them. It is used in token of being bound by an oath (Num 5:22; Deut 27:15-26; Neh 5:13; 8:6; 1 Chron 16:36).

Dealing with: God

- Eyes
- Cloud
- White raiment of Priests / Priestess
- Sword
- Bridegroom

Heavenly Things:

- Angels
- Horns
- Wings
- Incense
- Sun
- Mountains
- Sea of Glass

Humans:

- Kings-Priests / Queens-Priestess
- Name
- Crown
- Candlestick
- Golden Sash and Bow
- Stars
- Forehead
- Sealing on forehead
- Bride or Woman

Animals:

- 4 Beasts
- Lamb and Sheep
- Serpent or Snake
- Horses
- Dragon

Numbers:

- 7 Seals
- 1/3
- 2
- 3
- 3 ½
- 4
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 12
- 24
- 40
- 144
- 666
- 1000

Colors:

- White
- Black
- Red or Scarlet
- Brass
- Gold
- Pale
- Green

Symbolismⁱ

- = Light and Knowledge, Multiple Eyes is Omniscience
- = Shekinah, God's Glory & Protection in the Wilderness
- = Robes of the High Priest (Ex 29:5; Dan 10:5)
- = God's Word: Command, Judgment
- = Jesus the Messiah or Christ
- = Heavenly Servants (JST)
- = Power and Strength, both Good and Bad
- = Power to Act
- = Ascending Prayers of the Righteous
- = Celestial Glory, the Son of God, Daily Reminder of Second Coming
- = Temples, Patterned after the Heavenly Temple, Separation from World
- = Omniscience of Heaven or Celestialized Earth
- = Heirs of God (Rev 1:6; D&C 84:38)
- = Personal Character, Authority, or New Name for the Initiated
- = Conqueror (laurel wreath in John's time)
- = Church as carriers of Christ's light, Temple symbol of the Spirit
 - = Clothing for Kings and Priests, respectively
- = Servants / Angels of God (i.e. church leaders)
- = Desire, Thoughts (also associated with heart)
- = Anointed with Calling and Election
- = God's Church Members or Covenant Israel
- = Individual Animals Representing their Classes in Heaven
- = Christ and His Disciples, Gentleness, Meekness, Humility, Submissiveness
- = Originally a Symbol of Christ that was Usurped by Satan's Temptations
- = War Animal
- = Evil, Destruction (in Greek snake and dragon are interchangeable)
- = 7,000-year History of Adam's Posterity on the Earth
- = Portion, Limited, Bounds Have Been Set
- = In Hebrew the Life Force, Creative Power, Male and Female, Witnesses
- = Godhead, Divine Involvement Related to Atonement (3hrs, 3days, 3crosses)
- = Midway to being whole or complete
- = Geographic Fullness, Totality, Four Quarters (not corners) of the Earth
- = Not Complete, Imperfect
- = Creation, Complete, Whole, Fullness, Perfect, Oath, Eternal Life (Egyptian)
- = Christian Sabbath, Rebirth, Covenant of Circumcision, and Baptism
- = Divine Order, Priesthood, Organization of Creation (12 moons+months)
- = Fullness of Priesthood, Exaltation or One's Calling and Election Sure
- = Period of Purification, Trial, Testing, Probation, Mourning
- = Priesthood Power Perfected (any multiple of 12 speaks of God's Order)
- = Trinity of Imperfection, Satan, Great and Abominable, Anti-Christ
- = Large Number, Period of Time, Magnified Number, Length of Seal
- = Victory, Purity, Righteousness, Spirit, Light, Revelation
- = Sorrow, Grief, Mourning, Sin, Judgment, Darkness, Destruction
- = Atonement, Mortality, Blood, Bloodshed, Sin, Violence
- = Judgment, Stability, Strength, Endurance, Permanence
- = Divine, Wealth, Celestial, or, Worldliness (depending on the context)
- = Impending Death, Cadaver
- = Vegetation, Life

ⁱ Adapted from Alonzo L. Gaskill, *The Lost Language of Symbolism*, Deseret Book, 2003.